**Call for Input: Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment**

**Submission of Ireland**

**June 2020**

The EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 published by the European Commission on 20 May 2020 highlights that the crisis facing biodiversity and the climate crisis are intrinsically linked. Climate change accelerates the destruction of the natural world, and the loss and unsustainable use of nature are in turn key drivers of climate change. Nature-based solutions, such as protecting and restoring wetlands, peatlands and coastal ecosystems, the sustainable management of marine areas, forests, grasslands and agricultural soils, will be essential for emission reduction and climate adaptation.

Biodiversity provides the critical underpinning necessary for nature to be able to provide essential eco-system services to people- including climate change mitigation and adaptation, food security, health and resilience. The continuing trend of biodiversity loss undermines nature’s ability to continue to provide these services. Reversing this decline requires significantly increased efforts at all levels of society and across sectors.

*National measures to protect diversity*

There are five main drivers of biodiversity loss in Ireland, namely, intensive agricultural and forestry practices, overfishing, invasive alien species, changes in land use and over-exploitation of resources such as peatland.

Project Ireland 2040 contains a commitment to investing €60 million to protect Ireland’s natural heritage and biodiversity.

The most important legislation underpinning biodiversity and nature conservation in Ireland is the Wildlife Acts 1976- 2018 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.

Ireland’s National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021[[1]](#footnote-1) sets out actions through which a range of government, civil and private sectors will undertake to achieve Ireland’s ‘Vision for Biodiversity’ which is *‘that biodiversity and ecosystems in Irelands are conserved and restored, delivering benefits essential for all sectors of society and that Ireland contributes to efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems in the EU and globally’.*

The plan contains 119 targeted actions, underpinned by seven strategic objectives which lay out a clear framework for Ireland’s national approach to biodiversity, building upon past efforts and achievements.

In September 2019 the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht published the Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan[[2]](#footnote-2), prepared under the National Adaptation Framework, a statutory Framework under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.The development of the Plan involved inclusive consultation with experts, stakeholders and the public throughout the process of its creation.The Plan’s goal is to protect biodiversity from the impacts of climate change and to conserve and manage ecosystems so that they deliver services that increase the adaptive capacity of people and biodiversity.

Part 4 of the recently launched EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, sets out the Commission’s proposals for the EU and its Member States to play an increased role in setting the global biodiversity agenda. The Strategy contains a number of measures which are targeted at agreeing an ambitious new global biodiversity framework post-2020 at the upcoming 15th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD-COP15). The Strategy highlights, *inter alia*, the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources linked to biodiversity (through the Nagoya Protocol to the CBD); and also a principle of equality with regard to the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities as well as the participation of all stakeholders to ensure a smooth and fair transition.

Ireland introduced legislation in 2019 (S.I. 253 / 2019) to implement the EU ABS Regulation (511/2014) on the fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources and is working on the process of ratifying the Nagoya Protocol. This will ensure Ireland has in place a solid and durable legal framework for the implementation of this important aspect of the CBD.

*International development*

Ireland recognises that global environmental problems cannot be solved alone. The impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss will be felt disproportionally by poor and vulnerable people worldwide, with women often the most affected. Investing in biodiversity and tackling biodiversity loss can help achieve both climate change and development goals.

Ireland’s international development policy *A Better World* identifies food as one of its intervention areas. It is recognised that agriculture and food systems are central to a sustainable future, and that unprecedented growth across the world, coupled with climate change, has placed increasing pressure on natural resources, including sustainable management of land and water ecosystems.

Irish Aid works with priority countries in Africa on projects aimed at adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change. Nature based solutions are indispensable for climate change mitigation and adaption. Irish Aid’s priority countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are implementing nature-based solutions which tackle climate mitigation and adaptation challenges. For example, Ethiopia, Liberia, Malawi. Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda are all part of the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative which aims to restore 100 million hectares of forest land by 2030. Irish Aid priority countries are also implementing ecosystem-based adaptation projects.

1. <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/National%20Biodiversity%20Action%20Plan%20English.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2019/10/doc-7-climate-change-sectoral-adaptation-plan-for-biodiversity.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)